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A Message From the Surgeon General: Navy Medical Education and Training

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(NO COMMENTS)

By Vice Adm. Matthew Nathan, U.S. Navy surgeon general and chief, U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery



Medical education and training is the foundation of the world-class care we provide around the globe. It ensures our personnel are medically ready and deployable; it allows us to administer cutting-edge care on, above, and below the water; and ensures that we are razor-sharp in our health care skills.

This month, I would like to highlight Navy Medicine's vast medical education and training programs. Whether you are a flight surgeon student at the Naval Aerospace Medicine Institute (NAMI) in Pensacola, Florida, an Independent Duty Corpsman at the Surface Warfare Medical Institute in San Diego, or a pharmacy technician at the Medical Education and Training Campus in San Antonio, I commend your dedication, not only towards pursuing your education, but also helping Navy Medicine to achieve its mission. I am continually impressed by the great work you are doing and the cutting-edge skills you are honing to keep our Sailors, Marines and beneficiaries safe.

Around the Navy Medicine enterprise, we are making great strides in continuously improving our medical education and training programs to meet the next challenge and ensuring our students have the right skills for the job. For instance, great work is being done at NAMI, which is the sole Navy source for aeromedical training at all levels. The institute trains more than 240 aeromedical providers, including those from our foreign allies, every year. NAMI flight surgeon students attend joint medical evacuation training at the United States Army School of Aviation Medicine where they perform hyper-realistic, scenario-based, aviation medical patient care in dynamic flight simulators. Their training directly impacts medical readiness by ensuring all graduates of the flight surgery program are skilled medical practitioners in both aviation medicine and medical evacuation care. This is truly valuable in aviation medicine, but also during medical evacuation on the battlefield.

Earlier this year, the Surface Warfare Medical Institute expanded its training for the Surface Force and Dive Independent Duty Corpsman (IDC) Program with two new state-of-the-art Virtual Reality Medical Simulation rooms, enhancing the learning environment for both students and instructors. The IDC Program, through support of Naval Medical Center San Diego's Bio-Skills laboratory, has also incorporated the use of human cadavers into its training cycle, providing students eight hours of cadaver lab, which will enhance IDC students' understanding of anatomy and physiology during physical exams and medical

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treatments.

As we both provide care and train in more fiscally-constrained times, we have sought to increase efficiency in our medical education and training programs. In the past year, we have established on-demand web-based continuing education modules at the [Naval Postgraduate Dental School, Bethesda, Md.](#), to reduce the costs of provider licensure maintenance, which has been very successful. We have also implemented phase two training sites for the Pharmacy Technician Program in San Antonio and are saving over \$1.7 million in Department of Defense travel funds through the development of local Memoranda of Understanding with five Veteran Affairs pharmacy sites, six civilian hospitals, and three Air Force facilities. Similarly, we have saved significant travel dollars for all three services by being able to score and select graduating medical students at a Virtual Selection Board for our GME program. These three initiatives are great examples of how we are looking to increase efficiencies and decrease costs, while maintaining world-class medical education.

As we look to the future, many of our medical education and training programs are working on developmental tools that will keep our Sailors and Marines safe. For instance, at the Naval Survival Training Institute (NSTI) in Pensacola, Florida, an altitude simulation chamber still under development, will allow us to provide life-saving altitude hypoxia training directly to fleet aircrew without the added risks of barometric changes experienced in a traditional altitude chamber. Altitude hypoxia is one of the leading causes of in-flight mishaps and emergencies. This training has been considered the cornerstone in aeromedical threat training and mitigation, saving lives throughout the fleet. NSTI expects to field these devices fleet-wide within the next three to five years for refresher training for Department of Defense aircrew.

Also, since spatial disorientation for aircrew is an additional cause of in-flight mishaps, NSTI is working with our aeromedical research partners to bring a high-fidelity spatial disorientation/visual illusion trainer and demonstration device online. Although still under development, this training will allow in-classroom training of life-threatening illusions outside of the flight environment. It is an example of remarkable innovation that will not only train our students, but keep our personnel safe and decrease flight mishaps.

The results of being a service that provides world-class care, anytime and anywhere are seen in our medical centers and on the battlefield, but they begin in our classrooms and training exercises. Here, we have the most qualified individuals teaching the new generation of Navy Medicine providers and staff. Without proper education, we simply could not do the great things we do, each and every day. As always, I am honored to be your surgeon general. Keep up the outstanding work and I will see you around the fleet.

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